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METHODS OF TEACHING THE TALMUD IN THE
PAST AND IN THE PRESENT.

IN the *October* number of this REVIEW, 1897, Herr David Farbstein put the question how it came that the knowledge of Talmudical lore possessed by the pupils of the modern Rabbinical seminaries was so small and unsatisfactory? He found the cause of this deplorable phenomenon in the faulty method of teaching, and suggested an improvement mainly consisting in this, that a distinction be made between the subject-matter of the various laws contained in the Talmud, and that the non-ritualistic law be taught by a jurist in the way Roman law is treated at the universities. I will not enter upon the various assertions, made with the best intentions, in the afore-mentioned article, and will only briefly observe that no seminary has made it its object to teach Talmudical civil or penal law. As for the latter, it has not been applied for the last millennium and a half. Palestine indeed reserved the right for itself to judge in criminal cases according to the national law; in all other countries, even in Babylon, the home of the Babylonian Talmud, the rule applied *אין דנין דיני קנסות*, "penal cases are not tried." As to the Talmudical civil law, it has lost its practical significance in the whole of Western (and partly also in Eastern) Europe, ever since our co-religionists bring their cases before the courts of the country and not before the Beth-Din.

However, it is true enough that the teaching of the Talmud does not bear the fruits that are universally expected. But this is the case not only in the modern Rabbinical schools, but also in the old-established "Yeshibot," in the Talmud-Torah's, and in all Talmudical schools, whether old or new, whether in the west or in the east of Europe. It is usually overlooked that, in the old Talmudic schools, hundreds of pupils are engaged in the study of the Talmud, of whom only a comparatively insignificant minority acquire a moderate knowledge of the Talmud, though it should be easy for these pupils to make themselves familiar with a branch of knowledge to which they devote themselves from their very infancy. On the other hand, it is an

exaggeration to say that an average jurist has a more thorough knowledge of Roman law than a certified Rabbi has of the Talmud. I think the question ought to be put in a broader sense, in the sense I put it in an essay written by me several years ago (*Magyar Zsidó Szemle*, VIII, 208-222), namely, thus: "Why is the result of the tuition of the Talmud in our days unsatisfactory?"

We do not speak of the complete absence of all results, for this would be an exaggeration contradicted by fact on all sides. But it is certain that the results obtained give no satisfaction. This is evident from the numerous and general complaints that make themselves heard from time to time in the press in all countries. Such complaints do not, as Herr Farbstein thinks, apply merely to the students of the modern Rabbinical seminaries, but also to that of the pupils of the old-fashioned Talmudical schools. The general lament even applies to the Talmud-Torah institutions, where younger lads are supposed to be initiated in the mysteries of the Babylonian Talmud, but in truth it remains a book with seven seals. In my essay mentioned above I included all modern, and partly also some old, colleges of that kind within the circle of my investigations; but I shall now confine myself to the modern institutions only, because they are of the utmost importance for the present and for the future, and because I believe that a public discussion may tend to an improved state of things.

Everything has its causes, and the cause of the fragmentary knowledge of the Talmud displayed by its modern adepts has, of course, been sought for. Several causes were found. The *laudatores temporis acti* are of opinion that the youth of the present generation possess less taste for the Talmud because their religious zeal is less; also that the modern pupil is less gifted than the youth of the times passed by. These reasons are based upon that conception, occurring in the Talmud in various forms, that "if the former generations were angels we are men, if they were men we are asses." It is difficult to understand how it is possible to deny to the present generation intellectual endowments in the face of the great triumphs achieved by the human mind, both in natural and mental science, and in particular it is very curious to find this theory of degeneration applied to a branch of knowledge which is, with our co-religionists, not a new acquisition but a very old one indeed. No more ought a want of religious zeal to be mentioned, because the modern Rabbis, as every thinking person will admit, have, as a matter of fact, saved Judaism in civilized countries.

As another cause for the decreased study of the Talmud, the circumstance is mentioned that less time is available for that class

of study than formerly. This must certainly be admitted; yet it only explains why the student of the present day cannot compete in that direction with those of former times. It offers no reason why so few modern scholars make the study of the Talmud their speciality. This latter question is frequently answered in this way—"that the Talmud is an extremely difficult and uninteresting discipline, and that it is, besides, a thankless study and without special value in modern times." The latter question we will not discuss; it is a sad fact that most of the modern congregations display much enthusiasm for the Talmud on paper, but not when electing a Rabbi. But the former assertion is decidedly erroneous. The Talmud and its literature comprises the spiritual activity of two millenniums; it is, after the Bible, the greatest creation of Judaism. It has imprinted its stamp upon the Jewish mind, and its effects can be perceived in many writings composed by profound thinkers and jurists of the Jewish race, who themselves had no knowledge either of the Talmud or of its influence upon their minds. The Talmud affords nourishment to the mind not a whit less intellectual than any modern literature, and is even more interesting, provided we understand how to arouse an interest for it in the minds of our generation. The study of Judaism has branches of much drier character than that of the Talmud; inquiries about names of persons and localities, about historical dates and titles of books, the collation of MSS. and old prints, &c., have not any more refreshing effect on the mind than the study of the Talmud, which is pervaded by the breath of ancient life. Nevertheless, a lively activity prevails in the field of those disciplines that are called history, philology, &c., whilst the Talmud is neglected, attracts only an occasional devotee, and has hardly any readers except among the specialists.

This question brings us to the crucial point. The Talmud, in the way in which it is generally taught, has neither object, nor material, nor method. The modern schools, whatever names they may bear, have adopted indiscriminately the system and method—in as far as they deserve these names—of the *Cheder* and the *Jeshiba*, without considering what a world of difference lies between the two. We will not speak of those schools that have, in modern times, taken the place of the *Cheder*, although they are of importance also as preparatory schools for the special study of the Talmud. We shall only consider the special schools. In the times when the tradition was living, in the age of the Mishna and the Talmud and even much later, the instruction consisted in committing to memory of the whole of the Rabbinic material and its dialectical treatment—a procedure which the ancients themselves admit to have been very

onerous. During the following centuries the treatment of the whole of the material of the tradition was still the object of the schools both in the East and in Spain, which was intimately connected with the former. But there was no longer the same amount of painful memory work, which, besides, had become impossible on account of the steady increase of the material. The aim rather was to acquire such a mastery over the material as was requisite for religious practices. It was this object which the authors of Codes, among which Alfasi's compendium takes the first rank, had in view. Those discussions of the Talmud which had no bearing upon the Halacha were therefore omitted, as were also those portions which were no longer valid. The very method of the Babylonian Amoraites was adopted, who, for the same reason, did not comment on, or, in other words, did not study the first and the last "Orders" of the Mishna, with the exception of one treatise in each which was still of practical significance. The highest point of development in this direction was reached by Maimuni's immortal code of laws. He, however, included also, for the sake of keeping the system intact, those religious laws that were no longer in force in his days, and prefaced, probably after the Arabic pattern, the whole work with a theological introduction. *In the days of tradition it was the handing over from mouth to mouth, in subsequent ages it was codification, which formed the basis of tuition.* In diametrical opposition to these two directions stands the Franco-German method of instruction. The latter attached most importance to profundity of discussion, to "learning." With this method it was no longer possible to make the entire mass of traditions the object of the school, for the short span of time would not have sufficed. This method is strikingly characterized by the legend that the Tosaphot to each treatise originated with a distinct author; there was a consciousness that in this way of studying a whole lifetime was required for composing notes to one single treatise.

The three directions, as sketched out here, coincide with the prevailing spirit of their respective ages. The oral law issued from the people, but the people know only tradition, not literary composition. The Sadducees had a written book of laws; the Pharisees, the men of the people, knew no such book. The origin of the oral law is tradition; the latter was adhered to even long after tradition had become a literature, and it was only consistent to prohibit perpetuation of the tradition in writing. Plato says justly that the invention of the art of writing brought about a weakening of the memory. In the circle of the Talmudists, writing did not serve the purposes of study, memory asserted its full force in consequence. Literary composition arose among the Jews through the influence of Syrians,

Arabians, and perhaps also by genuine development. Their mental powers being tasked otherwise, they found themselves compelled to make extracts out of the sea of the Talmud, to write manuals for the purpose of maintaining the latter in practical life. This was done by the Gaonim in their "Halachot," which were written under various titles, and in their other works. Prominent in this direction is Alfasi's compendium; still more prominent the *Mishna-Torah* of Maimuni. About the twelfth century flourished in France the *glossatores* of Roman law, and the Tossaphists, who were the *glossatores* of Talmudic law. The same spirit prevails in either school.

The school of the Tossaphists conquered in the course of time the whole of Europe, including Spain, and from the seeds sown by them sprung forth the method which has prevailed for the last 400 years. In spite of the admiration due to the piety and the diligence of these scholars and of the Talmudic heroes of the German-Polish period, it must be admitted that most of them were unable to uphold the comprehensiveness of view which distinguished the Talmudic scholars of the earlier periods. The later generations were bent under the iron oppression of the dark Middle Ages, confined in their ghettos, and more and more excluded from general culture. Circumstances were narrowing their minds from no fault of theirs, consequently their study also became narrow and degenerated into *micrology*. The neglect of culture, forced upon them from without, led to narrowness; the acumen of former times sank into subtlety. The every-day life was more than ever ruled by religious ceremonies, and the study of the Talmud became limited almost exclusively to those portions which bore upon the necessities of the times. The universal taste for subtleties was indulged in by the Talmudic specialists also, and it would have been wonderful indeed had it been otherwise. The protests of the Gaon of Wilna and of Isaiah of Berlin, who were perhaps already affected by the influences of the modern Jewish age, bore very little fruit. According to the spirit which prevailed, subtlety was the principal thing, the subject to be dealt with was of secondary importance. Several weeks were spent in the study of single pages of the Talmud, and all commentaries and decisions thereon, in as far as they were known, were taken into consideration. A learned Rabbi who stood at the head of a school did not allow himself to be guided by the educational requirements of his school, in reality all he did was to admit his pupils to his private studies. He chose his subjects without regard to his *Bachurim*, and it was a matter of mere chance whether he drew one or another drop from the sea of the Talmud wherewith to quench the thirst of his scholars. I willingly admit that there were exceptions,

but, on the whole, the description given here, answers to the method of teaching the Talmud which was in vogue when the new era commenced.

This educational method has not been entirely discarded even at the present day, although the general conditions and the demands made on the Rabbinical profession have been totally altered in this respect. It is true, the *Pshatshen*, which formerly had been so highly esteemed, have already become the exception, and only serve as a test of Talmudic knowledge. The scientific treatment has made a certain progress, but in reference to teaching, the state of affairs is essentially what it was before. I base this assertion upon the annual reports of the special schools, in which, try as one may, no fixed order of study can be detected in the sense in which it exists in the study of law, medicine, or in pedagogics or in technical pursuits. There is no well-defined syllabus of the subjects which it is intended to impart to the students, nor any previously determined course of study for the purpose of mastering it. One might imagine that certain portions of the Talmud would have been selected and divided over a course of five or six years, which were to be repeated after the lapse of the course, so that the same curriculum would always be gone through again with new students. But this is not the case. As in the old schools, it quite depends on chance which particular treatise and which folios thereof the students are made acquainted with. There being no defined subject-matter, there can be no ultimate object of tuition. But there is something more injurious than the absence of a defined subject-matter, namely, the continuation of the old educational method.

In reality it is not the Talmud which is taught, but the Talmud is employed as a text to the history of its exegesis. In the higher special tuition the Talmud does not form the principal subject-matter of the lecture, but it only affords the indispensable basis to illustrate to the audience, more or less completely, the attempts of a large number of commentators, *glossatores*, writers of *novellae*, &c., in their exegetical, codifying, or other pursuits. No special school of modern times has been able to rid itself entirely of these evils. Those commentaries which the first printer of the Talmud placed on the margin in accordance with the taste and the requirements of his time are still considered indispensable, in spite of the altered circumstances and different scientific conditions. Quite in the spirit of former methods they still form the standard for the distinction drawn between the "principal" and the "secondary" *Shiur*, and all that has been reformed is only the change of these terms into those of "*Statarisch*" and "*Cursory*." The Talmud is the only scientific discipline which is treated in this manner. No one

will seriously deny that the modern method of teaching all branches of biblical study has borne considerable results. The amount of biblical knowledge of the present age not only holds its own against that of the immediately preceding period, but surpasses it. Where would we be now if the student were to be dragged at every verse through the labyrinth of all old and new commentaries and, without receiving any guidance, were left to his immature judgment to decide which of the many explanations was the correct, or, at least, the most probable one? What should we say about such a method of teaching Greek, if, for the sake of finding a grammatical form, first the Alexandrine scholiasts would be consulted, then the opinions enumerated that have since accumulated, and in such a way as to cause the student to believe that all these opinions were of equal value? "What result," I wrote several years ago, "would be achieved, in teaching Roman law, by seizing at random some texts, and quoting thereon the French *glossatores* and the various remarks of the commentators and writers of *novellae* of all times without indicating the correct interpretation? What idea would a student obtain of Greek philosophy, to whom the opinions of some philosophers would be communicated from their own works, without making him acquainted with their system, their native countries, and the age in which they lived?" Such comparisons could be continued and the question put, Whether Geography is taught after such a method which would deal at every point with all the opinions that prevailed between the times of Strabo and Ritter? I do not fear contradiction when I say that the Talmud is the only discipline which carries the student through every source in the manner described. It is true, there is, within the prescribed limits, a certain variety in reference to the quantity and number of the commentaries, &c., that are consulted; but there is no essential difference, whether in this or in the unparalleled enthusiasm of the teachers of the Talmud who would like to transfer to their pupils all their knowledge and their power at one stroke. The objectionable method did not have the same injurious effects in the case of the old teachers who devoted their whole lives exclusively to the study of the Talmud. But at the present time it is impossible, even for the most highly gifted students, to acquire the necessary amount of knowledge and to become independent readers, in view of the fact that the time devoted to this study is snatched from that required for other branches of learning. We need not, then, further discuss that method of teaching which puts the students' judgment under the tutelage of every authority hundreds of years old, and leaves their independence no other field except the admiration of the ancients whose achievements

must be put to memory. But even the most modern and most acute critic formally teaches according to the usages of mediæval Jewish pedagogical methods.

We are of opinion that both in modern and old-fashioned schools considerably greater results could be achieved if the Talmudical texts were made the principal basis of tuition, and not their commentaries and supercommentaries. This is not a dogmatic, but a pedagogic, question. Far be it from us to slight the latter; on the contrary, we highly value all commentaries and *novellæ*, all compendia and codes; they are indispensable as auxiliaries to a correct understanding of the Talmud and of the religious laws. Yet we maintain that it is for the teacher, whose judgment is already matured, to consult them to any considerable extent, but not for the student. The lecture must certainly be based upon the study of all auxiliary sources at hand, but the latter may not form its subject-matter. Every possible question, interpretation, difference of opinion, and modification that was ever written down, should not be brought forward at every single passage of the Talmud, for by such procedure the amount of actual Talmudic matter is reduced to a minimum, the student loses the very ground under his feet, and his brains become confused. The most classical of all commentators (Rashi) may serve as a pattern; *he may have taken the Midrash of the Tannaites for his model*; he was also acquainted with the various interpretations, controversies, difficulties, &c.; and for all that, we can count on our fingers the passages in which he mentions two explanations. Why should not also at the present time a selection—a very limited selection—be made, since the teacher is at all events in a better position to do so than the pupils confided to his care. The objects the old commentators and codifiers had in view was the composition of a work which should be sufficient for a complete understanding of the Talmud, and make all other works superfluous; their works contain therefore neither polemics nor supercommentaries. *The only thing required is, consequently, to return to the more ancient methods* mutatis mutandis, a proceeding happily made easy by the matchless commentary of Rashi. Only a judicious selection from all the other commentators should be offered to the pupils. In spite of all admiration for the ancients, we cannot close our eyes to the fact that, in view of the limited time at disposal for the study of the Talmud, the customary method of noticing the commentators, the authors of epitomes, and the codifiers pushes the Talmud itself out of the place which it should solely occupy. In order to make the students acquainted with the contents and the spirit of the Talmud, it is quite sufficient to explain the text after regard has been paid to the auxiliary works. It is true, if this method be adopted, the modern

institutions will not send forth great Talmudic scholars after the pattern of those of past times; but this cannot be regretted, for even the customary methods, which take those famous Talmudic scholars as their ideal, are unable to achieve that object. The still existing institutions where the Talmud is taught after the old-fashioned manner are no exception to this rule. It is not true that the new method suggested by us would cause the Talmudic lectures to be less profound on account of the elimination of the pilpulistic commentaries, for the profundity of a lecture is always commensurate with the conception of the lecturer, to whom, besides, a free choice remains. Even Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* will appear shallow in the lecture of a shallow philosopher, so will Darwin's theory appear superficial when expounded by a superficial scientist.

Should this pedagogic principle be generally adopted, we might hope for the complete, or, at least, approximate, realization of the object of the teaching of the Talmud which was almost always aimed at in olden times, and which is still kept in view here and there in the schools in the East. This was to make the students acquainted with the contents of the Talmud, or, at least, with the most important parts thereof. According to the method practised at present, everywhere almost without exception, the aggregate of all the Talmudic texts mastered in fully ten years does not amount to more than two of the larger treatises. This can be easily verified by any one who does not mind taking the trouble to obtain statistics from the annual reports and other publications both of the modern and the old-fashioned institutions. The same period, with less trouble and fewer weekly hours, devoted to the Bible suffices to master all twenty-four books of the Bible, the bulk of which almost equals the half of the Mishna and the Babylonian Talmud, if we deduct from the latter the numerous parallel passages it contains. At the time when tradition was still alive, people devoted a much shorter period to these studies; they had, moreover, to attend to their secular occupations, after the fulfilment of which they applied themselves to the task. Yet they were able to commit to memory the complete material of the tradition word for word. Why should it be impossible to master at the present day the half of that material, not verbally, but the substantial contents, during twice the period, and by those whose whole life is devoted to study? Such possibility undoubtedly exists, provided the time for teaching and learning be not monopolized by the minute study of the commentaries.

Should the method of teaching the Talmud be altered in the sense of our suggestions, it would be necessary for a course of lectures to be held on the *History of the Exegesis of the Talmud*, so as to ensure

a general knowledge and independent understanding of those commentaries which formally domineered, but would now be banished from the ordinary lectures. Such course would be independent of the instruction in the Talmud, and we are not aware of any institution having taken up that subject as a separate discipline. All aids to the study of the Talmud are to its students at the present day so many phantoms hovering in the air, unassociated with time and space, except to specialists. It does not require a lengthy demonstration to prove that a knowledge of the age and country of the authors, as also a general idea of their points of view, is indispensable for a scientific understanding and estimation of those products of the mind. We should like to apply this conception of the exegesis of the Talmud to all compendia, codes, in a word to all works auxiliary to the understanding of the Talmud. It is a matter of course that the dictionaries must be included. The knowledge of the history of the treatment of the Talmud in its various directions is of not less importance for the study of that work than the history of biblical exegesis for Holy Writ.

If the knowledge of the texts of the Tannaites and Amoraites were made the chief object of teaching the Talmud, the teacher's task would perhaps become more difficult than it is now. For, in spite of the quicker march of his lectures, he would have to study for himself those exegetical works with the same thoroughness as before, and would, besides, be compelled at every step to choose with independent judgment the right interpretation. But still, this would present no difficulties in view of the zeal which distinguishes the teacher of the Talmud, and which is a heritage from the old teachers. He would only be too glad if his pupils made greater progress owing to the fact that the work was made easier for them. We are convinced that such reforms of the teaching methods would bring back our young generation to the Talmud, the vigour, richness of ideas, originality, and profundity of which has a magic effect upon those who are bent upon acquiring knowledge. It is only the undue importance attached to the *minutiae* and the superabundance of commentaries that causes the studious youth to turn away from the Talmud. The objects of instruction would already be materially modified by the change in the mode of lecturing. It is known that the Talmud is not a homogeneous work, in which a certain branch of knowledge is being dealt with, but a whole literature, which comprises a selection of the mental products of at least six centuries, and which dwells on questions closely connected with life itself. The customary method treats the Talmud as the primary authority for the sum total of the practical religious injunctions; the object is—whether consciously or

unconsciously—the training of jurists of the ceremonial law. The *pilpulistic* method still flourishes, even if the teacher does not make any such observations of his own, for the auxiliary works he makes use of are more or less imbued with the pilpulistic spirit. The ceremonial law is studied as a conglomeration of legal precepts. The student is unable to form an independent judgment in that field; they become therefore infused with *pilpul*, a habit easier acquired than abandoned. The method suggested by us does away with that peril. The texts of the Tannaites and Amoraites, even in the most strictly legal portions, deal, with rare exceptions, with cases taken from real life. The student will gain a vivid picture of the life and habits of the ancients by going through a considerable amount of matter, without allowing his attention to be drawn off from the simple contents. This will rouse a thirst for learning, for everybody will find in that treasury something adaptable to his own special branch of study, something referring to the history of civilization, or some archaeological or historical data bearing upon his studies at the universities. There is plenty of material there requiring scientific treatment, not only in regard to theology, but also in regard to philosophy and philology. We may safely assume that all students of the Rabbinical seminaries attend philosophical and not juridical lectures; the above-mentioned *aperçus* will therefore fall on a more fertile soil than the juridical ones which predominate in the customary method. The Talmud must, already in the lectures, be placed within the cycle of all other literatures, so that the student may find in the Talmud ample points of contact with his other branches of study which are of the greatest interest to him, and he will be induced to strive after an independent treatment according with his own points of view. I will illustrate my view by some examples. There is no beginner who has not heard of such principles as enunciated in the sentences (1) *השוואל את הפרה וכו'* (3), *בטל בששים* (2), *סתם כלי של נכרי אינו בן יומו* (1). But it will not perhaps occur even to a well-informed student of the Talmud on applying the above principles that No. 1 gives an indication of the mode of life of the non-Jewish antiquity (pointing to the rarity of cooking); that No. 2 has arisen from the Babylonian mode of using the number 60 to indicate a round number, of which several more instances are found in the Talmud; and that No. 3 pictures the miserable condition of the Palestinian Jews, impoverished, as they were, by the Romans, and that it was quite usual for the former to be without beasts of burden of their own, so that they had to borrow or to hire them. They probably worked also with cows from poverty (and not because of the prohibition of castration, for the importation of beasts of burden was certainly allowed), so as to obtain both the milk and the

labour. There are plenty of other instances. In one word, we are of opinion that subjects of this kind have been altogether neglected. The literature is in this respect greatly in advance of the method of teaching. There is no reason why Talmudists should not be trained to satisfy modern requirements. The ancients did satisfy the requirements of daily life, and attached importance now to the ritual laws, now to civil law, &c.; in the same way at the present day the requirements of science should be taken into account with those of religion. Is it not a disgrace that it was left solely to a non-Jew to attempt to expound a system of Rabbinic theology? We should cease to consider as the *raison d'être* of a Rabbinical seminary only this, that it combines what, separately, existed before; in other words, we should cease to consider a Rabbinical seminary as an old-fashioned Yeshiba, in which, besides the Talmud according to the customary method, other branches of the knowledge of Judaism are also taught.

We again emphasize that our exposition is completely independent of the dogmatic standpoint from which the Talmud and its exegetical and legal literature may be considered. We have been dealing with the question from a purely educational point of view, and our suggestions have had for their object solely the method by means of which the instruction of the Talmud can be made more fruitful and the interest in it roused; they apply equally to the conservative and the critical methods, which latter is being applied, e.g. by the Chief Rabbi of Amsterdam in his work, and by other prominent conservative Talmudic scholars. This is a question for the teacher himself to consider. The knowledge of religious practice is henceforth also to be obtained by readings from the Codes. We are, however, of opinion that more favourable results could be obtained in that direction also, if the instruction were given rather in a practical way instead of the customary theoretical one. In the first place, the chief importance should be attached to those subjects which apply most frequently in the religious practices of every-day life, and, secondly, in ordinary cases only that rule should be given which is valid at the present day. The history of each question, i.e. the opinions that have arisen in the course of time, should be left to individual study of special subjects. It is a well-known Talmudic adage that you hold nothing if you grasp too much. But I will not, for the present, enlarge on this point, in order to leave space for an enunciation of the course of study to be followed.

According to our view, the *object* of teaching the Talmud is not to dialectically master single portions, but to acquire knowledge of its contents, its spirit, its doctrines and principles. The *subject-matter* chosen to attain that object should consist of selected Talmudical texts

(including *Jerushalmi*), comprising the greater portion of the whole work. This material must be distributed according to a fixed syllabus over the several years of study, after which it has to be repeated, so that uniform results be obtained for all students, a thing the importance of which ought not to be underrated. The teaching *method* is that ancient one which only knew of instruction from the mouth of the teacher. No commentary must be read. The teacher consults, as heretofore, all those auxiliary works which he thinks fit, but imparts to his pupils only that which is indispensable for the plain interpretation and elucidating of the text and the subject, pointing out the various *aperçus*, analogies, &c. The pupils must be prepared to read the text themselves. The difference between Talmud "*Statarisch*" and "*Cursory*," taken over from the Yeshibas, should be done away with. A second discipline should be introduced, running parallel with the one sketched out, called "The general history of Talmudic literature," in which everything should be taught in a methodical manner which bears reference to the schools, the age, and the country of the Talmudical authorities, the origin, collection, and tradition of the sources, the history of the commentaries, compendia, codes, *Responsa*, &c. The systematic use of this method will require selected portions from the works under discussion to be read in connexion with the Talmudic lectures. The third discipline is to consist of the *Shulchan Aruch*, which is to be taught in the manner we have suggested. The best work to serve as a basis is Karo's work (not Tur with *Beth Joseph*, which is too diffuse and not suitable for present circumstances).

The *course* of study varies according to the amount of knowledge possessed by the students on entering the special schools in different countries. But the principal standard should be the course recommended by the Talmud. We find in numerous passages the combination of Bible, Mishna, and Talmud (מקרא משנה תלמוד). But the present day is not like those olden times, when the Bible was learned in the elementary school, Mishna in the intermediate, and Talmud in the high school. Nor are Bible, Mishna, and Talmud equally distributed over a number of years. But the notion that everything is found mixed up in the Talmud, must at least more thoroughly be done away with than has hitherto been done. In the first place, a more thorough knowledge of the Bible should be aimed at. The next important point would be the study of the Mishna, or, more generally, the Tannaite literature, which would, besides, serve to strengthen in the minds of the pupils the spirit of the Hebrew language. After this only the Talmud, the principal subject, should be attacked. As a matter of fact, the Mishna is based on the Bible,

as the Talmud is based on the Mishna. In view of changed circumstances and scientific requirements and opinions, the prejudice of the immediate past, as if the study of the Mishna were unworthy of the *Lamdan*, should be discarded, and we should here again return to the Talmudic notion, according to which it is better to have a thorough knowledge of the Mishna only, than a superficial knowledge of the latter coupled with the Talmud. This view applies substantially also to the present day. The syllabus could, therefore, be arranged so as to teach the Bible to beginners, the Mishna to the more advanced, and the Talmud to the highest class of pupils, although, of course, instruction in all three disciplines would be imparted in all three stages.

It will be seen that our exposition refers solely to the fundamental principles of the tuition of the Talmud ; it is not our intention to propose a detailed and comprehensive syllabus. This would be impossible, because such syllabus is too much dependent on the special conditions under which the study is pursued in each case, and by which it would be materially modified. We are, however, firmly convinced that an exchange of ideas between specialists of the same and of different shades of opinion would throw considerable light upon the problem in question, and that to a great extent a consensus might be arrived at. We live in an age of international scientific congresses ; why should not a conference be convened of representatives of the science of Judaism, where, among other subjects, the schemes of tuition at the Rabbinical schools could be discussed ? A discussion on all disciplines that are taught at the seminaries would be eminently useful. Jewish theology and literature should make use of modern resources also in that direction to its own advantage, and we confidently hope that a competent authority will take the matter in hand and settle it for the benefit of all.

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[This article has been in type for a considerable time, but its publication has been accidentally delayed.]